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Defectors: A Profile

By Vladislav Krasnov

PALO ALTO, Calif. — Every five years or so, the K.G.B. issues alphabetical lists of "enemies of the Soviet state," which are distributed among operatives in the Soviet Union and abroad. They contain basic data on each "enemy" and are stamped "absolutely secret." One such list, in effect a K.G.B. "wanted" list on defectors, was stolen from a K.G.B. office and found its way into the hands of the National Labor Union of Russian Solidarity, an émigré organization headquartered in Frankfurt, West Germany. After examining my own entry on that list, I concluded that the document was completely authentic.

Here is a typical entry, somewhat shortened and with names deleted to protect privacy. It not only contains the usual police record on the "culprit," but often sheds some light on how the wanted list is to be used.

" — born in Moscow, nationality Russian, incomplete university educa-

tion, former student of the Institute of Oriental Languages of the Moscow State University, resided in Moscow. Height 172 centimeters, strongly and athletically built, hair light brown, wears glasses, hands large and sinewy. Wife —, father —, mother —, and brother — live in Moscow.

"While serving as an interpreter on the staff of the Ministry of Mining of Afghanistan in Kabul, disappeared during the night of October 31, 1967. Resides in the USA where he was recognized from a photograph by members of the New York Mission of the Embassy of the USSR. A photograph and handwriting sample are on file."

There are 470 such entries on the "wanted" list that covers the period from 1945 to 1969. Compiling my own data on defectors since 1969, I had to rely on some 200 cases from newspaper clippings and other published reports. It may be safely assumed, however, that the total number of defectors is actually much higher, since neither the K.G.B.'s nor my own records are complete. Among those not accounted for would be those who died after the defection, those who returned to the Soviet Union voluntarily or involuntarily, and those who escaped undetected.

After a computer-based statistical analysis of the K.G.B. data, the following picture of the average defector emerges: He is about 28 years old, male, of medium height, strongly built, with light brown hair and blue or gray eyes. He is neither a ballet dancer nor a K.G.B. agent but a soldier. In fact, of the 470 cases, 241 defected from Soviet occupation forces in East Germany and Eastern Europe, nearly a quarter of them officers.

Authorities have tried 284 defectors (60.4 percent) in absentia, and have found all guilty; 224 of them (mostly soldiers and K.G.B. agents) were sentenced to death. The death penalty seems to have been meted out regardless of education, rank, or ethnic background. A breakdown by ethnic background, incidentally, shows that the majority of defectors are either Russian or Ukrainian. This roughly reflects the proportion of these nationalities in the total population of the Soviet Union. However, the rate of defection among Balts, Armenians, and especially Estonians and Jews, is disproportionately high.

The erection of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago slowed but did not stop the flow of Soviet defectors. As a consequence, artists, intellectuals, and diplomats have displaced soldiers as the dominant group. However, if we exclude those defections that took place under the "abnormal" pre-wall conditions (when the borders to the West were not hermetically sealed as they normally

are in a closed society), it can be demonstrated that there has been a steady rise in the annual rate of defections. It rose from 7.3 persons per year under Stalin to 9.3 under Nikita S. Khrushchev and to 17.65 under Leonid I. Brezhnev. The rate has apparently continued to rise in the last decade, and my data support the July 19 statement by Theodore Gardner, a Federal Bureau of Investigation official, who said that the number of Soviet defectors has significantly increased in the last five years.

The rising rate of defections inevitably calls into question the loyalty of Soviet troops. If the Soviet Union decides to invade Poland, it stands to lose many soldiers through defection. The conditions would be ripe. Language and cultural barriers would be lower than anywhere else. Soviet soldiers might be unwilling to fight Slavic brothers, "Communist comrades," fellow workers, peasants. The psychological barriers for defection would be lower than at any other time since World War II. A soldier would now be defecting to a world where he could read novels by Solzhenitsyn, listen to Rostropovich, watch Baryshnikov dance, and root for Korchnoi when he seeks the world chess crown.

Vladislav Krasnov, a Soviet defector, is professor of Russian studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution. This article is adapted from a paper he presented to the recent convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies.

